



Morning Alert - Tuesday, October 18, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK, TV Asahi, and most national dailies gave top play to reports on the inaugural meeting of a panel of experts held on Monday to discuss ways to reduce the official duties of the Emperor and his wish to abdicate. The panel, led by Japan's Business Federation Honorary Chairman Takashi Imai, is expected to come up with recommendations by early next year. NTV and Fuji TV led with reports that a student from a prestigious private high school in Tokyo was arrested on Monday for injuring other students and a teacher with a knife in a classroom. TBS gave top play to a report on Tokyo Governor Koike's decision to review plans to build new sports facilities for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. Nikkei led with a report on a plan by Honda to establish a vehicle assembly plant in China.

INTERNATIONAL

ROK rejected U.S. idea of flying bombers in group with Japan

Asahi wrote that in response to North Korea's nuclear test on Sept. 9, the U.S. Pacific Command flew B-1B bombers over South Korea on Sept. 13 to apply pressure on Pyongyang. According to a source connected to U.S.-ROK relations, the U.S. had informally sounded out South Korea on the idea of flying South Korean and Japanese bombers in a group over South Korea to demonstrate the unity of the three nations against the DPRK. However, Seoul declined the offer out of concern that the public would react negatively to SDF aircraft flying over their country.

China seeks to become "space superpower"

Asahi reported on China's successful launch of a manned spacecraft on Monday, saying that the mission demonstrates China's ambition to turn itself into a space superpower. The paper wrote that

there is concern among the U.S., Japan, and Europe over China's growing presence in space development because they have not yet decided whether to continue the International Space Station project beyond 2024. The paper added, however, that the U.S. is seeking increased international cooperation in space, noting that President Obama and Chinese President Xi agreed at their talks in China in September to enhance dialogue and cooperation in space exploration. Sankei also reported on China's ambition to become a space superpower.

China objects to Abe's offering to Yasukuni Shrine

Mainichi and Nikkei wrote that a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson commented during a regular press briefing on Monday on Prime Minister Abe's "masakaki" tree offering to Yasukuni Shrine for its autumn festival. The spokesperson said that "China firmly opposes the senior Japanese government official's wrong way of doing things."

GOJ remains mum on report on living abductee in Pyongyang

Most papers wrote that concerning an earlier press report that Kyoko Matsumoto, a Japanese woman believed to have been abducted by North Korea in 1977, has been admitted to a Red Cross hospital in Pyongyang, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga said at a news conference on Monday: "The government has received a variety of information. We will refrain from commenting on a specific case." Tottori Governor Hirai asked the GOJ taskforce on the abductions to confirm the credibility of the information about Matsumoto, who is from Tottori.

GOJ closely watching policy discussion by U.S. presidential candidates

Asahi wrote in a full-page report on the U.S. presidential election that the GOJ is worried about Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump's remarks indicating the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Japan and the possibility of Japan going nuclear. Meanwhile, Tokyo expects that Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton would uphold President Obama's policy of attaching importance to Asia. However, the GOJ is concerned that a Clinton administration would call on Japan to play additional security roles in world affairs.

SCIENCE

Keidanren urges swift ratification of Paris Agreement

Mainichi reported on a meeting on Monday between Environment Minister Yamamoto and Keidanren chairman Sakakibara, during which the two agreed on the need for Japan to swiftly ratify the Paris Agreement on climate change. The business leader said it is necessary for Japan to ratify the agreement to fulfill its responsibilities to the international community, and the minister responded by saying the GOJ will make utmost efforts to ratify the agreement as soon as possible.

ECONOMY

Poll: 57% oppose resumption of nuclear power plants

Asahi front-paged the results of its nationwide telephone poll conducted on Oct. 15-16, in which 57% of respondents expressed opposition to the resumption of operations at nuclear power plants, while 29% expressed support. Opinions were divided among LDP supporters, as 42% supported the resumption while 45% opposed it. Some 78% of supporters of the Democratic Party expressed opposition. Among those who do not support a particular political party, 24% supported the resumption while 59% opposed it. Support for the resumption was strong among men and the young generation. About 60% of male respondents aged 18 to 29 supported the resumption, while about 30% did not.

POLITICS

Ruling parties' defeat in Niigata to impact nuclear policy, possibly TPP ratification

Most papers reported on the ruling coalition's concern that their candidate's defeat in the Niigata gubernatorial election on Sunday will affect the Abe administration's plan to restart operations at idled nuclear power plants and the Diet deliberations on the TPP agreement. Yomiuri wrote that in addition to the resumption of operations at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa Nuclear Power Plant, the TPP was a major concern for voters in Niigata, one of the largest rice-producing prefectures. Ryuichi Yoneyama, who won the election, expressed opposition to the TPP during the campaign. Mainichi speculated that his victory demonstrates local farmers' dissatisfaction with the GOJ's efforts to ratify the TPP accord.

